

Claims

- [c1] A system for providing real time information on the internet of the amount of a utility commodity used at a meter and its cost comprising
- (A) an internet site at which the usage of said utility commodity at said meter is viewed and at which a utility company posts pricing information for the use of said utility commodity at said meter;
 - (B) an automatic meter reader that provides real time information on the amount of said utility commodity used at said meter;
 - (C) communicating means for sending information between said automatic meter reader and said internet site, whereby said utility company sends pricing information to said automatic meter reader and, using said pricing information, said automatic meter reader calculates the cost of said utility commodity and sends said cost and amount used to said internet site where it is posted in real time; and
 - (D) optional means for directly communicating between said automatic meter reader and said utility company without communicating with said internet.

- [c2] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said cost is also posted at said automatic meter reader.
- [c3] A system according to Claim 1 wherein payment is made at said internet site.
- [c4] A system according to Claim 1 wherein payment is made at said automatic meter reader.
- [c5] A system according to Claim 1 wherein access to said automatic meter reader is protected by a password.
- [c6] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said utility commodity is electric power.
- [c7] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader calculates said cost with a delay of less than 5 minutes.
- [c8] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader displays data in an LCD display window at the site of said meter.
- [c9] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said communicating means is a telephone line.
- [c10] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said communicating means is a wireless connection.
- [c11] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said optional

means is a direct phone link or a wireless link.

- [c12] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said system includes a means for maintaining an unique address for said automatic meter reader, whereby said automatic meter reader is reached online with the same ID regardless of the internet logon ID.
- [c13] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said amount information is sent via an internet server provider and the internet to a utility company server, said server selects a billing algorithm and computes a bill, and said bill is converted to a web-enabled format and is displayed on a utility company website as an online bill, the above process loops continuously thereby providing real time updating of said bill.
- [c14] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said amount information is stored at said automatic meter reader, said automatic meter reader computes a bill, and said bill is converted into a web-enabled format and is displayed as a webpage on the internet.
- [c15] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said amount information is stored at said automatic meter reader, said automatic meter reader computes a bill, said amount information is transmitted to a utility company server, is

stored at said utility company server and at said automatic meter reader, and said bill is displayed at said automatic meter reader.

- [c16] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader includes a card reader for credit or debit card payment of said bill.
- [c17] A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader sets off an alarm when said pricing changes.
- [c18] A method of generating, displaying, and paying a utility bill comprising installing a system according to Claim 1.
- [c19] A system for providing real time information on the internet and at an electric power meter of the amount of electric power used at that meter and its cost comprising
 - (A) an internet site at which the power usage at said meter, the price of said power, and the charges for using said power at said meter can be viewed;
 - (B) an automatic meter reader that provides real time information on the amount of said utility commodity being used at said meter;
 - (C) means for sending information between said automatic meter reader and said internet site, whereby said utility company sends pricing information to

said automatic meter reader and, using said pricing information, said automatic meter reader calculates, in real time, the cost of said electric power usage at said meter and sends said cost and amount to said internet site where it is posted; and

(D) optional means for directly communicating between said automatic meter reader and said utility company without communicating with said internet.

[c20] A method of generating, displaying, and paying a utility bill comprising installing a system according to Claim 19.

[c21] A system for providing real time information on the internet and at an electric power meter of the amount of electric power used at that meter and its cost comprising

- (A) an internet site at which the power usage at said meter, the price of said power, and the cost for using said power at said meter can be viewed;
- (B) an automatic meter reader that provides continuous information on the quantity of said utility commodity being used at said meter;
- (C) means for sending information between said automatic meter reader and said internet site, whereby said utility company sends pricing information to said automatic meter reader and, using said pricing information, said automatic meter reader calculates

the cost, in real time, of said electric power usage at said meter, posts said amount and cost at said meter, and sends said cost and amount to said internet site where it is also posted; and

(D) optional means for directly communicating between said automatic meter reader and said utility company without communicating with said internet.

- [c22] A method of generating, displaying, and paying a utility bill comprising installing a system according to Claim 21.